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LET'S TALK DIGITAL: AN APPROACH TO MANAGING, STORING, AND PRESERVING TIME-BASED MEDIA ART WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Born-digital time-based media art is an emerging and rapidly growing art form that poses significant technology challenges to art museums and other collecting institutions across the globe. Within the Smithsonian Institution, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the National Portrait Gallery are working together to address the unique challenges inherent in preserving works of this kind. Born-digital works are generated in real time using digital information stored in the form of binary data. As such, they are vulnerable to the same integrity or data corruption and obsolescence concerns as any digital file format or software. The preservation of born-digital works requires both IT-based infrastructure to safely store and organize this data, as well as an organizational method to document, describe, and categorize information related to the artist's intent and the work's provenance. To meet these needs, the Office of the Chief Information Officer has developed the Digital Asset Management System and the National Portrait Gallery has created the Time Based Media Archival Package. The Digital Asset Management System is an enterprise-level system used to store, manage, preserve, and share the Smithsonian's rapidly growing collection of digital assets and related information. An enterprise digital asset management system is essential to meeting the Smithsonian's objectives for the following: preservation and stewardship of objects and specimens; organizing, classifying, and locating digital assets; delivery of digital assets in multiple

formats; public outreach and education and electronic commerce; and participation in external cultural heritage, library, and science initiatives.

The Time Based Media Archival Package is a method used to organize time-based media assets including the digital essence of the work, as well as related curatorial, exhibition, and collections management related documents. This presentation will include discussions of the Digital Asset Management System architecture (including hardware, database, application software, storage, staffing resources, and operational procedures); its functional aspects (such as user roles, asset security policies, ingest methods, metadata models, and transcoding); and the structure and various components of the Time Based Media Archival Package.

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